

NEWS FROM ED MARKEY

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 10, 2005

CONTACT: Michal Freedhoff

Mark Bayer

(202) 225-2836

LOST DIRTY BOMB MATERIALS FOUND IN BOSTON

Incident highlights inadequate security measures over radioactive materials

Washington, DC: Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA), a senior member of the Homeland Security Committee and the House Energy and Commerce Committee, the panel which oversees the regulation of nuclear materials, today released a letter sent to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) regarding reports that two radioactive sources of Americium (Am-241) imported from Russia by Halliburton Energy Services went missing in October 2004 and only yesterday re-appeared in Boston, MA.

“In the face of overwhelming evidence that Al Qaeda is trying to obtain nuclear materials, the NRC still hasn’t beefed up its rules to the point where we can be sure these materials can be kept out of terrorists’ hands,” said Rep. Markey. “Instead, we have a nuclear ‘lost and found’ system where materials may go missing for months.”

According to the February 10 edition of the NRC events report, Halliburton Energy Services had shipped a well logging source and calibrating source containing 18.5 curies of Am-241 Be and .5 curies of Am-241 from Nizhnevartovsk, Russia to Houston TX. Both sources were contained in a container which weighed almost 200 pounds. The sources went through Amsterdam to JFK in New York and cleared customs in New York on October 9, 2004, and then disappeared until yesterday, when the source appeared at the Forward Freight facilities in Boston, MA. According to the report, the sources appear to have been trucked to Boston after a Boston label was inadvertently placed on the package at the Newark facility of Forward Freight.

The amounts of Am-241 Be and Am-241 that disappeared for 4 months fall into the IAEA Category 3 class, which are described as sources, which “if not safely managed or securely protected, could cause permanent injury to a person who handled them, or were otherwise in contact with them, for some hours. It could possibly — although it is unlikely — be fatal to be close to this amount of unshielded radioactive material for a period of days to weeks.”

The letter requests information related to:

- When the NRC was first informed about the missing shipment, what actions the NRC took to investigate and locate the source and alert other federal, state and local officials to its disappearance, and whether it will impose penalties on the entities who may have violated applicable laws or regulations.
- Why the NRC doesn’t plan to implement a radioactive source tracking system until 2007 even though such a system was recommended by an NRC/DOE working group in 2003.
- Whether any of the individuals working in the Boston facility could have been exposed to radiation as a result of this incident, and why such a large package that should have been labeled as being radioactive went unnoticed for 4 months.

Rep. Markey is the author of the Dirty Bomb Prevention Act and has repeatedly attempted to prod the NRC into action on the problem of unaccounted-for dirty bomb materials. For a copy of the letter released today or more information on the Dirty Bomb Prevention Act and the problem of missing dirty bomb materials, please go to <http://www.house.gov/markey/dirtybombs.htm>.